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INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHNJ/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 1491  
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 1531  
RUEHKE/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0943  
RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA 0183  
RUEHMA/AMEMBASSY MALABO 0214  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0396  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC

UNCLAS YAOUNDE 000497

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DEPT FOR EB/ESC/IEC, AF/C  
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY  
EUCOM FOR J5-A AFRICA DIVISION AND POLAD YATES

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TAGS: [ENRG](#) [EPET](#) [PREL](#) [CM](#) [EK](#)

SUBJECT: NOBLE ENERGY BRIEFS BIYA ON EXPLORATION PLANS IN CAMEROON

¶1. (SBU) Summary. President Paul Biya on April 18 told Charles Davidson, the visiting president and CEO of U.S. energy exploration company Noble Energy, that he welcomed U.S. investment in Cameroon in all sectors. Biya committed his government's full support to Noble and all other U.S. investors. After hearing that Noble will be drilling in 500 meters of water in the Gulf of Guinea, Biya told Davidson that if the company did not find oil there, he would welcome exploration in the Bakassi peninsula on Nigeria's border. End summary.

¶2. (U) President Biya met for over 30 minutes with Davidson, Noble Executive VP/COO David Stover and other Noble executives, accompanied by Charge. Davidson explained that Houston-based Noble Energy was an exploration and development company that was one of the first firms to operate in Equatorial Guinea. Noble continues to have active interests there as well as in locations throughout the world, including China. Davidson told Biya that Noble had high hopes for its planned activities in Cameroon and would maximize synergies because its block is adjacent to one the company has in EG. Davidson told Biya that because of the depth of the water where Noble will drill - 500 meters - there was no guarantee they would find oil. But he said their research indicated a high likelihood of success.

¶3. (U) Biya stressed his support for U.S. investment, offering an illustrative anecdote. He told us that the president of another country (he did not specify which) confided that he had given an oil exploration concession to a non-U.S. firm, which searched for years but found nothing. He then offered the concession to a U.S. firm, which promptly found oil. Biya said he was pleased that U.S. investors are interested in Cameroon, and assured Davidson of the full support of the government. Biya specifically noted that SNH, the national hydrocarbon corporation, was attached to the Presidency. He told Davidson that if he ever had any difficulty dealing with any ministry or SNH, he and the Embassy could and should bring the matter directly to him.

¶4. (SBU) Comment. The very fact that Biya received the Noble delegation reflects the importance he attaches to U.S. investment in Cameroon. Biya has offered assurances of full government support before, but U.S. firms continue to be

frustrated by the effort required to navigate Cameroon's bureaucracy and fend off corrupt officials. Biya's comments on Bakassi could indicate that he is starting to focus on the economic development of that region now that Nigerian troops have withdrawn and the transition to full Cameroonian control is underway. End Comment.

NELSON